



Julia Crawford Ivers

Also Known As:

J. C. Ivers, Julia Ivers, "Lady of the Shadows"

Lived:

October 3, 1867 - May 9, 1930

Worked as:

co-director, co-screenwriter, director, editor, film cutter, producer, production supervisor, scenario writer, screenwriter

Worked In:

United States

by April Miller

When discussing Julia Crawford Ivers, film historians primarily emphasize two things: her remarkably introverted personality, and her role as principle scenarist for William Desmond Taylor (Foster 1995, 199; Lowe 2005, 286). However, her 1930 obituaries assign Ivers a more independent and influential position, with the *New York Times* describing her as a “scenario writer, director and production supervisor” (19) and the *Los Angeles Times* making the inflated and incorrect claim that Ivers was “the second woman to become a film director in Hollywood” (A20). Given that a number of other women directed motion pictures before Ivers had her first opportunity in 1915, this last claim may say more about the way early Hollywood publicity machines operated than about the nature of her film industry work between 1913 and 1923.

One might speculate that Ivers, given her tendency to avoid publicity, became an inadvertent public figure after she found herself briefly considered as a suspect in Taylor’s infamous, and still officially unsolved, 1922 murder. Perhaps it was this suspicion, combined with her extreme shyness and the almost total unavailability of photographic images of her, that led to the name “Lady of the Shadows” that has become attached to Ivers. The few glimpses we have of Julia Crawford Ivers come from the obligatory publicity she did as a studio employee, reviews of the films she wrote and directed, and her aforementioned obituaries. At the time of her death, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Ivers entered the film industry in 1913 when she began collaborating with Frank A. Garbutt. At that time, Garbutt was working with the Oliver Morosco Photoplay Company, which produced films for release under then-distribution company Paramount Pictures Corporation. In 1920, during a *Moving Picture World* interview with A. H. Giebler, Ivers admitted that she was flexible during her early years working in the industry, having “done almost

everything around a studio but sweep the floor” (951). After six years at Morosco, Ivers began the next stage of her career in the production arm of the powerful Famous Players-Lasky/Paramount organization (A20). At what she calls “the Lasky plant,” Ivers wrote, directed, and held a variety of other positions “from film cutter and editor to superintendent of the plant” (Giebler 951).

While under contract to the Famous Players-Lasky Company from 1919 to 1922, during which time it became vertically integrated as Paramount Pictures Corporation, Ivers worked closely with William Desmond Taylor, a collaboration that resulted in the production of approximately twenty films and ended abruptly with Taylor’s 1922 murder. After Taylor’s death, Lasky appointed Ivers as one of the studio’s four supervising directors, making her, according to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1923, “the only woman to have directed from the Lasky lot” (III 33). This phrasing, “from the Lasky lot,” allows for a seemingly contradictory fact: another woman, the renowned [Lois Weber](#), was hired the year before Ivers and proceeded to direct some films for Famous Players-Lasky. While Weber was clearly under contract to the same studio between 1918 and 1921, she may not necessarily have shot her films on the lot. Karen Mahar suggests that Weber’s contract was not renewed because she failed to fully adapt to the “modern” morality mandated by Lasky’s box-office formula (Mahar 2006, 148). We thus need to know more about the specific circumstances that might explain why Ivers was attributed such an unusual position on the Lasky lot, particularly given what is known about the paternalism of the company. For example, some women who worked with producer-director Cecil B. DeMille (scenarist [Jeanie Macpherson](#), secretary [Gladys Rosson](#), editor Anne Bauchens) were retained as long as they were loyal.

The Famous Players-Lasky writing department, under William deMille, was similarly tight-knight and patriarchal in those years, though women scenarists such as [Beulah Marie Dix](#), [Marion Fairfax](#), and [Clara Beranger](#) enjoyed relatively long tenures. An interview conducted by the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* while Ivers was shooting *The White Flower* (1923), the last film she would direct, reveals both her fierce independence as a writer and director and her willingness to defer to all-powerful producer Jesse Lasky. “I wrote the story... with a genuine love and affection for the islands, and will produce it in the same way. No ‘roughneck’ of a director will have a chance to squeeze the fragrance out of the plot, for I am going to direct the action myself,” she says. However, Ivers follows up this confident statement by dutifully crediting her powers to Jesse Lasky’s largess: “Mr. Lasky permitted me to select my own cast and to choose my technical force, camera man, art director and all. I am in full charge and I have every confidence in my company” (Ivers 1992).

While it may seem surprising that Julia Crawford Ivers was the only woman to whom Jesse Lasky assigned a directing project once Weber’s contract expired, one must keep in mind that Ivers arrived at Famous-Players Lasky with both directing and screenwriting experience. In 1915, Ivers wrote her first screenplay for the still surviving short *The Rug Maker’s Daughter* (1915), a Morosco Photoplay Company production that starred the celebrated dancer Maud Allan in her debut film appearance. In that same year, Ivers also directed her first film, the dramatic short, *The Majesty of the Law* (1915), an extant film that, like many of Ivers’s later films, was well received by critics. We know from the review in the *Atlanta Constitution* that *The Majesty of the*

Law, praised for its appeal to “all classes,” tells the story of a Virginia judge who sternly hands down severe sentences while in court only to later help the families of those he condemns (B4). *The Washington Post* gave another one of Ivers’s extant films, *A Son of Erin* (1916), a similarly positive review, describing the tale of a peasant who moves to America to discover the “promised land” as a “screen story of unusual beauty, full of action and appealing in its beautifully romantic charm” (4). Although directorial credit for *The Call of the Cumberlands* (1916) is often ascribed to Frank Lloyd, AFI and FIAF both attribute Ivers with director credits for *The Call of the Cumberlands*, another extant film, which compares well with other, better-known later feud films exquisitely shot on location in Appalachia, such as *Stark Love* (1927), directed by D. W. Griffith’s cameraman, Karl Brown, and [Dorothy Davenport Reid](#)’s last production, *Linda* (1929). Also in 1916, Ivers adapted *The Heart of Paula*, which was also shot on location, this time in Pedro Blanco, Mexico. Most remarkably, Pallas Pictures, which shared a studio with Morosco at the time, promoted *The Heart of Paula* as a film that offered motion picture theatre managers a unique choice: they could screen either of the two distributed endings, which the *New York Times* described as either “tragic” or “happy.” Anthony Slide says that although William Desmond Taylor has most often received credit for directing *The Heart of Paula*, it is possible that this extant title was either codirected by Taylor and Ivers or by Ivers alone (Slide 1996, 127).

Ivers, like other writer-directors such as [Marguerite Bertsch](#) and [Ruth Ann Baldwin](#), also commented on the relationship between writing and directing. In 1920, she is quoted as saying that “The writer is only a helper... and sometimes very poor help. More stories have been spoiled than made by writers who tried to put them in picture form, and if many of the writers who are yelping for credit on the screen should be debited with the lack of imagination and lack of vision they display, they would have no more to say” (Giebler 951). In a 1923 *Boston Daily Globe* interview Ivers also contemplated how film production quality might be improved if directors and writers were to switch roles: “If all scenario writers could direct at least one picture... and all directors could write just one scenario, motion pictures would benefit tremendously” (11).

In her ten-year career, Julia Crawford Ivers was credited with writing more than forty original screenplays and adaptations, and she was praised in reviews for her technical knowledge as well as her writing abilities. In reviewing *Widow by Proxy* (1919), the *Atlanta Constitution* lauded Ivers as “a scenarist of rare talent and wide experience” and described her as “an expert on screen technique” (D5). Screen credits reveal that she effectively worked as a producer at Pallas Pictures on at least two films including the five-reel *Lost in Transit* (1917). In total, Ivers likely directed four films during her career, a fact substantiated by Ivers in an interview published in the *Morning Telegraph* in 1917, six years before she directed her final film, *The White Flower* (V6). While directing *The White Flower*, shot on location in Honolulu over the course of six weeks, Ivers shot scenes from inside volcanic craters, pineapple plantations, and lush undergrowth. Betty Compson described Ivers’s physical directing prowess to the *Washington Post*, explaining that “Mrs. Ivers has proved time and again that she yields the palm to no mere man megaphone manipulator. She took chances and smiled.... We worked in rain and wind, thunder and lightning, storm and stress” (59). Like so much of Ivers’s writing and directing work, *The White Flower* was critically well-received; yet it proved to be her swan song. Shortly after finishing the film, the *Los*

Angeles Times reported that Ivers “resigned her long association with the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation as supervising director” in order to pursue work as a free-lance writer (III 33). As with so many of these news reports from the 1920s announcing that the studio writer would “free-lance,” we have to wonder if this was the optimistic spin put on the more likely event that a studio contract was not renewed. In Ivers’s case, her failing health also prevented her from resuming her job as a studio scenarist, and she completed only two more writing projects before her death, after which her record of achievement in the industry became almost completely obscured.

Bibliography

“Director’s Burial Set for Today.” Obit. *Los Angeles Times* (9 May 1930): A20.

Giebler, A.H. “Rubbernecking in Filmland.” *Moving Picture World* (16 Oct. 1920): 951.

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“The Heart of Paula.” Rev. *New York Times*. (3 April 1916): 11.

Ivers, Julia Crawford. Interview. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (3 Oct. 1992); Rpt. in Bruce Long. *Taylorology: A Continuing Exploration of the Life and Death of William Desmond Taylor* 22 (October 1994). <http://www.public.asu.edu/~ialong/Taylor22.txt>

“Julia Crawford Ivers Free-Lances.” *Los Angeles Times* (9 Sept. 1923): III 33.

“Julia Ivers Gives New York a Call.” *Morning Telegraph* (17 Dec. 1917): V6.

Long, Bruce. *William Desmond Taylor: A Dossier*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1991.

“The Majesty of the Law.” Rev. *Atlanta Constitution* (22 Aug. 1915): B4.

“Movie Facts and Fancies.” *Boston Daily Globe* (20 Jan. 1923): 11.

“Mrs. Julia Crawford Ivers.” *New York Times* (10 May 1930): 19.

“A Son of Erin.” Rev. *The Washington Post* (26 Dec. 1916): 4.

“Widow by Proxy.” Rev. *The Atlanta Constitution* (12 Oct. 1919): D5.

Archival Paper Collections:

Cecil B. DeMille Archives. [Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library](#).

Filmography

A. Archival Filmography: Extant Film Titles:

1. Julia Crawford Ivers as Director

The Call of The Cumberlands. Dir.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Pallas Pictures US 1916) cas.: Dustin Farnum, Myrtle Stedman, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

2. Julia Crawford Ivers as Director and Screenwriter

The Majesty of the Law. Dir./sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Bosworth, Inc. US 1915) cas.: George Fawcett, Jane Wolfe, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

A Son of Erin. Dir./st./sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Pallas Pictures US 1916) cas.: Dustin Farnum, Winifred Kingston, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

3. Julia Crawford Ivers as Co-Director and Screenwriter

The Heart of Paula. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, Julia Crawford Ivers, st./sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Pallas Pictures US 1916) cas.: Lenore Ulrich, Velma Lefler, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

4. Julia Crawford Ivers as Scenarist / Screenwriter or Co-Screenwriter

Fatherhood. Dir.: Hobart Bosworth, aut: Julia Crawford Ivers (Universal Film Mfg. Co. Inc. US 1915) cas.: Hobart Bosworth, Helen Wolcott, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

The Gentleman from Indiana. Dir.: Frank Lloyd, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers and Frank Lloyd (Pallas Pictures US 1915) cas.: Dustin Farnum, Winifred Kingston, si, b&w; 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

The Reform Candidate. Dir.: Frank Lloyd, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Pallas Pictures US 1915) cas.: Maclyn Arbuckle, Malcolm Blevins, si, b&w; 35mm. Archive: [UCLA Film and Television Archive \[USL\]](#).

The Rug Maker's Daughter. Dir.: Oscar Apfel, st.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Bosworth, Inc. US 1915) cas.: Maud Allan, Jane Darwell, si, b&w. Archive: [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#).

Ben Blair. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers, William Otis Lillibridge (Pallas Pictures US 1916) cas.: Dustin Farnum, Winifred Kingston, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

He Fell In Love With His Wife. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Bosworth, Inc. US 1916) cas.: Florence Rockwell, Forrest Stanley, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [UCLA Film and Television Archive \[USL\]](#).

The Intrigue. Dir.: Frank Lloyd, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Pallas Pictures US 1916) cas.: Lenore Ulrich, Cecil Van Auker, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

The Stronger Love. Dir.: Frank Lloyd, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Oliver Morosco Photoplay Co. US 1916) cas.: Vivian Martin, Edward Peil, si, b&w, 35mm., 5 reels. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#), [Academy Film Archive \[USF\]](#).

The Bond Between. Prod.: Julia Crawford Ivers, dir.: Donald Crisp, sc.: George Beban (Pallas Pictures US 1917) cas.: George Beban, John Burton, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Tom Sawyer. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Famous Players-Lasky Corp. 1917) si, b&w. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Tom Sawyer. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Oliver Morosco Photoplay Co. US 1917) cas.: Jack Pickford, Alice Marvin, si, b&w. Archive: [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Good Night Paul. Dir.: Walter Edwards, adp.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Select Pictures Corp. US 1918) cas.: Constance Talmadge, Norman Kerry, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Filmoteca Española \[ESM\]](#).

A Lady's Name. Dir.: Walter Edwards, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers, cost.: Lucy Duff-Gordon (Select Pictures Corp. US 1918) cas.: Constance Talmadge, Harrison Ford, si, b&w. Archive: [Museum of Modern Art \[USM\]](#).

Up the Road with Sally. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Select Pictures Corp. US 1918), si, b&w, 35mm., 2 reels; 2000 ft. Archive: [UCLA Film and Television Archive \[USL\]](#).

The Veiled Adventure. Dir.: Walter Edwards, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Select Pictures Corp. US 1919) cas.: Constance Talmadge, Harrison Ford, si, b&w, 5 reels, 4565 ft. Archive: Private Collection.

Huckleberry Finn. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Famous Players-Lasky Corp. US 1920) cas.: Lewis Sargent, Katherine Griffith, si, b&w. Archive: [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#).

Nurse Marjorie. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc./adp.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Realart Pictures Corp. US 1920) cas.: Mary Miles Minter, Clyde Fillmore, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

The Soul of Youth. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Realart Pictures Corp. US 1920) cas.: Lewis Sargent, Clyde Fillmore, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Beyond. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers, Henry Arthur Jones (Famous Players-Lasky Corp. US 1921) cas.: Ethel Clayton, Charles Meredith, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Morals. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc./adp.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Realart Pictures Corp. US 1921) cas.: May McAvoy, William P. Carleton, si, b&w, 35mm.. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

The Witching Hour. Dir.: William Desmond Taylor, sc.: Julia Crawford Ivers (Famous Players-Lasky Corp. US 1921) cas.: Elliott Dexter, Ruth Renick, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#), [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#).

5. Julia Crawford Ivers as a Producer

The Bond Between. Prod.: Julia Crawford Ivers, dir.: Donald Crisp, sc.: George Beban (Pallas Pictures, US 1917) cas.: George Beban, John Burton, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

B. Filmography: Non-Extant Film Titles:

1. Julia Crawford Ivers as Screenwriter

Nearly a Lady, 1915; *The American Beauty*, 1916; *David Garrick*, 1916; *The Right Direction*, 1916; *The Cook of Canyon Camp*, 1917; *The Gypsy Trail*, 1918; *His Majesty, Bunker Bean*, 1918; *Huck and Tom*, 1918; *The Final Closeup*, 1919; *Widow by Proxy*, 1919; *The Furnace*, 1920; *Jenny Be Good*, 1920; *Wealth*, 1921; *In a Moment of Temptation*, 1927.

2. Julia Crawford Ivers as Screenwriter and Possible Director

Easy to Get, 1920; *The Green Temptation*, 1922; *The White Flower*, 1923; *Married Flirts*, 1924.

3. Julia Crawford Ivers as Producer

A Kiss for Susie, 1917; *Lost in Transit*, 1917; *The Trouble Buster*, 1917, *The Wax Model*, 1917.

C. DVD Sources:

Pioneers: First Women Filmmakers. DVD/Blu-ray. (Kino Lorber US 2018)- contains *The Call of the Cumberlands* (1916)

Credit Report

There are conflicting reports on authorship of a number of Ivers' films. AFI lists Maclyn Arbuckle and Edgar A. Guest as screenwriters on *The Reform Candidate*, while Spehr lists her as screenwriter. AFI lists Alice von Saxmar as a screenwriter on *The Stronger Love*, while Spehr again lists Ivers as screenwriter. FIAF lists Ivers as the producer on *The Bond Between*, *A Kiss for Susie*, and *Lost in Transit*, while AFI only lists her as the copyright holder. Finally, *The Call of the Cumberlands* (1916) is believed to be directed by Ivers, but is sometimes ascribed to Frank Lloyd.

Citation

Miller, April. "Julia Crawford Ivers." In Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta, eds. *Women Film Pioneers Project*. New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2013.
<<https://wfpp-test.cul.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-julia-crawford-ivers/>>